

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 4-8 as set forth below.

1. (Original) A sample dispensing apparatus comprising:
 - a sample container loading mechanism capable of loading a plurality of sample containers each containing a sample to be analyzed and including a mechanism capable of changing arrangement of said plurality of sample containers;
 - a reaction cuvette loading mechanism capable of loading a plurality of reaction cuvettes in each of which the sample to be analyzed and a reagent are mixed with each other, and including a mechanism capable of changing arrangement of said plurality of the reaction cuvettes; and
 - a sample dispensing mechanism for sucking the sample from said sample container and discharging the sucked sample into said reaction cuvette,
- wherein said sample dispensing apparatus includes a plurality of nozzles for sucking and discharging the sample,
- said plurality of nozzles being vertically movable to suck and discharge the sample independently of each other, said sample dispensing apparatus including mechanisms capable of moving said nozzles between said sample container and said reaction cuvette independently of each other.

2. (Original) A sample dispensing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said sample container loading mechanism has a particular position for sucking the sample, and said reaction cuvette loading mechanism has a particular position for discharging the sucked sample, and

said sample dispensing apparatus includes a mechanism for enabling said plurality of nozzles being vertically movable independently of each other to move on a fixed track in the form of a closed loop interconnecting said particular position for sucking the sample and said particular position for discharging the sucked sample.

3. (Original) A sample dispensing apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said fixed track in the form of a closed loop has substantially an elliptic shape looking from above said nozzles.

4. (Currently Amended) A sample dispensing apparatus according to claim 2~~or 3~~, wherein said particular position for sucking the sample is provided in plural.

5. (Currently Amended) A sample dispensing apparatus according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 4~~, wherein at least one of said nozzles has a liquid level detecting function of detecting a surface level of the sample in said sample container, and said sample dispensing apparatus has a function of transmitting, to one or more other nozzles, information regarding the sample surface level detected by said liquid level detecting function.

6. (Currently Amended) A sample dispensing apparatus according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~, wherein at least one of said nozzles has a nozzle clogging function of detecting clogging of the relevant nozzle, and said sample dispensing apparatus has a function of transmitting, to one or more other nozzles, information regarding whether a clogging factor is mixed in the sample.

7. (Currently Amended) A sample dispensing apparatus according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 6~~, further comprising a mechanism capable of stopping use of any of said nozzles and carrying out sampling by one or more other nozzles.

8. (Currently Amended) An automatic analyzer including a sample dispensing apparatus according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 7.~~